

What does the word Heaven mean in scripture and where is it?

First, we should define heaven. It is “an English word that was used sometime before the 12th century coming from the word heave or lifted up – Heaven.”

Strong's defines Heaven as:

- 1) the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it
 - 1a) the universe, the world
 - 1b) the aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced
 - 1c) the sidereal or starry heavens
- 2) the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings

When referring to the 2nd definition another source said, “a *often capitalized*: the dwelling place of the Deity and the blessed dead - b: a spiritual state of everlasting communion with God”

So we are left with 3 usable definitions or locations all called heaven, the sky, the stars or galaxy, and the third heaven most often associated with God and our eternal reward.

Translation errors?

There are not multiple words in Greek or Hebrew that were translated as heaven in English. Only one word was used regardless of the intention of the author. Heaven is the only word that was used. Therefore context must serve to explain to us which of the 3 heavens it refers to in an individual passage.

This is not entirely unheard of as in the common use of the word hand. If I say I am going to give you a hand, am I going to help you, applaud you, or give you a literal hand? We make this determination from context. Meanings of words are often determined by the context in which they are used.

Some references indeed illustrate the multiple use of the word heaven to mean more than one particular place.

1 Kings 8:27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”

Deut 10:14 “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.”

“Heaven and heaven of heavens” – are indicating both the sky above us and the galaxy beyond. (2 of our defined “heavens”)

1 – The Sky

To describe the sky where the clouds are and the birds fly. The “aerial” sky:

Gen 1:6-10 “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”

2 – The Stars or Galaxy

Scriptures also use the word heaven to reference the universe, or the stars of our galaxy:

Genesis 22:17: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

3 – The Third Heaven (Where God dwells - besides in our hearts)

Other scriptures use the word to reference the place where God dwells, the seat of order and perfection.

2 Chronicles 6:33 “Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.”

Will we go to the third Heaven after death?

We as Christians look for a home. A dwelling place that is eternal. Preachers sometimes reference a "Home in Heaven". Is that what we are promised? What are the promises?

We are promised eternal life.

John 3:14-16 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are promised a place in the presence of God.

John 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

We are promised a place "above" or "heaved up" from where we are now.

1 Thessalonians 4:17: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

So where is Heaven?

We are not told where heaven is, but it is a place already in existence in the spiritual realm.

Matt 6:19-21 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Paul met someone who had visited it.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

It is already in existence as testified by the fact God dwells there, treasures can be laid up there, and Paul met one who had been there.

We know it is a spiritual place beyond our realm, because of Paul's confusion of whether the person he met was in or out of the body. and his explanation in 1 Corinthians 15. In that chapter, Paul outlines that flesh and blood cannot inherit spiritual things and there is much even he did not know about the spiritual body which we will receive to allow inheritance. However it is clear, "...There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:44)

Conclusion

Heaven is a word used to describe 3 places: the sky, the galaxy, and the place where God dwells.

If we are found faithful, Heaven also correctly refers to the place of our eternal dwelling and a place where we have much to be excited about and look forward to inheriting.

Revelations 21:1-5 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

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